

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 13, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer,

As you craft the next coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic response package, we respectfully request that you provide no less than \$50 billion to support the child care infrastructure needs of frontline and essential workers, child care businesses, and the child care workforce.

Access to high-quality child care is essential to the well-being of families and children. Even before the current COVID-19 pandemic, too many families were struggling to find affordable, high-quality child care. These families have been spending a growing share of their income on child care, which limits their ability to afford other basic necessities, save money for a home or retirement, or cover the costs of an education. According to the Oregon State University College of Public Health and Human Sciences, all 36 counties in our home state of Oregon were child care deserts before the pandemic upended the livelihoods of working families, with only one child care slot for every three children who needed care. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated this problem for working families. Notably, since the pandemic started, access to child care has become more critical and more scarce. Without action, many providers and centers whether they are smaller in-home care businesses, franchise locations, or national child care providers will not be able to reopen their doors when social distancing requirements are eased. Closure of these businesses will seriously damage our child care infrastructure, and have the dual effect of being devastating for these businesses and their workforce and making it impossible for many parents to reenter the workforce.

We appreciate your leadership on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to help multiple parts of the complex early childhood education sector. This included \$3.5 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to provide for continued payment and assistance to child care providers and to support child care for essential workers. It also provided \$750 million in grants for Head Start, including up to \$500 million for support of summer programs in certain areas. Although the CARES Act was an important step, more childcare infrastructure funding must be provided to meet current child care needs of frontline workers, provide economic security for child care businesses, and support child care workers.

Health care workers, grocery workers, restaurant workers, public sector and first responders, farmworkers, utility workers, transportation workers, sanitation workers, and other hourly employees deemed essential are on the frontlines of this pandemic. As they devote their time to protect the health, safety, and well-being of our communities, they should not have to worry about whether their child has safe and reliable care. We are concerned that too many of these workers must still choose between paying for basic necessities - like rent and putting food on the table - and making sure their children are in good and safe care. We must dedicate more federal resources to support them during this national emergency, which is why we urge you to provide additional funding to help essential and emergency workers cover the cost of child care during this pandemic.

Additionally, we ask that you consider a significant and targeted infusion of funding to help child care providers, with dedicated funding or structured grants, and appropriate oversight mechanisms to guide this investment in the child care infrastructure. Many of these businesses are struggling to cover operating expenses and face permanent closure as states require them to shut down or limit their enrollment to the children of first responders and health workers. Private Oregon child care providers alone are experiencing a \$45 million per month drop in tuition payments. According to a recent [report](#) by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 27 percent of the Oregon child care providers surveyed indicated that, without additional funding, they would not survive a closure of more than two weeks. Alarming, 21 percent reported they could not survive a closure of any length without additional funding. For these providers to endure, we must provide them with a direct cash infusion during this national emergency. Though they may currently be closed, centers still have essential bills to cover—like rent, insurance, and more. They urgently need financial support to cover operating expenses so they will be able to re-open in the future.

Finally, we are concerned about the safety and well-being of the child care workforce. We urge you to provide sufficient funding in the next response package to support hazard pay and robust labor standards for child care workers. The next response package should also include language directing the Occupational Health and Safety Administration to issue an Emergency Temporary Standard to protect workers who OSHA or CDC identify as those working in fields that put them at elevated risk. This standard should include child care providers, who also must be provided with sufficient personal protective equipment to protect their health and well-being and help them safely serve the children of essential workers.

The child care system is essential to young children and working families, and this emergency support of at least \$50 billion is necessary for the system to survive. We appreciate your

consideration of our request and look forward to continuing to work with you to make investments that benefit our child care system a top priority.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Suzanne Bonamici".

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeffrey A. Merkley".

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron Wyden".

Ron Wyden
United States Senator